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## THE ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT, DR. CHARLES W. DORSEY, OF THE NATIONAL DENTAL ASSOCIATION

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## THE ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT\*

Dr. Charles W. Dorsey, of The National Dental Association,  
at Its Annual Session in Louisville, Kentucky,  
August 13-16, 1935

### *Prologue*

EACH year, when the Committee on Place makes its announcement of the selection of the part of the country and the city, many hearts are made glad, as, immediately, minds begin to plan a pleasant trip. In various cities are old friends, old classmates, historical points, cultural, educational and social interests; all of which will serve to help forget the humdrum of the year's office routine. All visitors, here assembled, are going to have a good time. The writer knows how Louisville treats all guests, particularly at convention sessions. The members of the National Medical Association, which met in this city in 1920, have never forgotten the wonderful ovation accorded them, and are agreed that the above session was one of the finest held during their entire existence. I reiterate that you are going to have a glorious visit; however, I am selfish enough to believe that this week will mean more to me than to any of you. When the city of Louisville was selected last year, I did not want to seem too radiant, as it might have seemed that there had been some "log-rolling" going on, but I was tremendously happy. I could visualize a reunion of old friends, a chance to shake the hand of old patients; for it was here, in the year 1914, that I began the practice of dentistry. My return today is a sort of home-coming to the scene of my beginning; to the people who believed in me in the very infancy of my dental life. I have been disappointed in not being able to return to this city before the summer of 1934, and then for such a short stay, but this unexpected pleasure will make up for all that I have missed, and I assure you that I am going to try to enjoy every minute of my stay.

### *Purpose of Session*

We are assembled for our fourth anniversary as the National Dental Association and the Twenty-second Annual Session as a dental organization. These yearly meetings are held for the purpose of bringing together members of our association in order that we may discuss any new scientific development in our field; that we may try to improve and perpetuate our organization; that we may try to create a better understanding between our profession and the allied medical groups; and, lastly; that we may build up a plan of cooperation with the laity,

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\* This address is published for the benefit of the entire dental profession. The very high caliber of the discussion commends it to a most careful consideration by all of us.

so that the public will be educated to become more dental minded. We must emphasize this feature of public instruction, and always work to a better and bigger program. By so doing we will keep up the interest of the individual members, and incidentally, save ourselves from the rut into which most organizations fall. It is only fitting that we take stock now of what we have accomplished up to this point, try to correct the mistakes, and plan for the real work that lies ahead of us. In view of the high type of hard working gentleman who now holds the office of President-Elect, I refer to Dr. W. H. Reed of Nashville, Tenn., I shall not presume to offer any rules for the incoming administration. Dr. Reed has been in dental harness for a long time and, to use the slang of the streets, he "knows what it is all about." However, it is fitting to mention certain observations, in the hope that it will make for a better future for our association. If *all* of us will get behind this incoming Executive, and I underscore the word *all*, we will find ourselves developing a National Society that will be worthy of such a name. It will take work, (plenty of it,) vision, and self denial. You know it is a failing that we like to come out when the "band wagon" is all in readiness to pull out, but we do not consider that some one has to look after the horses and keep the old wagon in repair. *This is every one's Association, and each individual is morally responsible for its success or failure.* Do not think when you have sat in session for four days out of the year, that you have finished your work. It is only started. To put this proposition across requires 365 days a year, and some nights.

At each convention men are urged to go out and "sell" the National Dental Association, i.e., boost the Association and get memberships. That is as it should be, but remember a salesman should have a "selling point"; he should have a house behind him that is producing the goods he is supposed to sell; a house that is building a reputation of which it is jealous. It is this type of house that makes a salesman's job easy, and gives him pleasure in his work. The National Dental Association must back its salesmen with a real, live, constructive selling plan. When men are convinced that our organization has an objective that is essential to their well-being, they will solicit the Association for membership, rather than to be begged to join, as is now the case. We have just started and our machinery is still very new, and a bit unwieldy. However, work, tolerance, and patience will soon get everything in a smooth working order. We have a fine big job ahead of us; one that will pay handsome dividends, if we will just work our claim. A constitution is to be submitted to you at this ses-

sion; a committee has worked on this document for two years before offering it to this body for approval. It might not be perfect, but it has been so drawn as to cover our needs. The most outstanding feature is that it will compel us to operate on such a high ethical and business plane that our prestige will be established among similar national associations.

A national organization must be fed by local and state societies. These subordinate bodies should be built upon the right principles, i.e., interesting programs, compulsory attendance, punctuality and business-like sessions. Factional fighting and petty politics must be excluded. The groups should be manned by men who realize the importance of the positions they hold; these centers make admirable training grounds for national material. We are mindful that it is not possible, as yet, to have a subordinate society in every community, but that it is our job to keep selling until we have covered the entire country.

#### *Guidance and Professional Propaganda*

Last year our convention met at Meharry Dental School. All who attended will agree that they have a dental plant that leaves nothing to be desired. It is complete in every detail and a credit to any group. The writer was keenly disappointed when President Muldowney gave us the enrollment for the year in the entire school, and stated that the graduating class had only four members. This past June we journeyed to Howard University for the Commencement. It was a beautiful sight; fine attendance, a great body of hopeful young men and women, the campus with its new buildings, and other added equipment. The whole set-up was one to make an alumnus very proud, until the Dean of the Dental School arose and presented three men for graduation. Gentlemen, how do you suppose dental men in that audience must have felt? It was an abrupt ending to an otherwise fine program. In the medical section there were possibly forty men, and only three in our profession. What is the answer? In trying to account for this unbalanced ratio, the writer came to the conclusion that the fault was largely with the dental profession. We dentists are the champion "blues singers"; we are always lamenting the fact that we entered into the practice of dentistry; how hard and underpaid the work is; how much it costs to take a course in dentistry; and finally how much it costs for equipment when the course is completed. It is true that our profession is a bit expensive, that it has been exceptionally hard hit during the past five years, and that many of the above complaints are true. However, dentistry must go on, and we must continue to

graduate dentists regardless of any unpleasant features. Ideals should be stressed in community service; we must train our men that everything is not based on the American way of thinking in terms of the dollar. There are millions of underprivileged people who are crying for help and enlightenment. Our job is to train men to go to these communities and educate these people to the better things, adjust fees to their income, and, by convincing them of honest interest, the income will take care of itself. In our daily conversations at the chair we inadvertently create a barrier; we talk to patients who are parents, who perhaps have made every sacrifice to get a child to the point where he or she is able to plan for a life's work. After hearing our little tale of woe, you would not expect them to be very enthusiastic about selecting a profession with such a dark outlook. Our duty, as dentists, is to change this sentiment. This can be done by the establishment of scholarships, and, this office is most gratified to know that there are now available at Howard University, sixteen dental scholarships. This is a splendid beginning, and will serve to inject new life into our work. It is indeed a ray of hope for the ambitious youngsters who would like to apply themselves, but are handicapped by lack of finances. Now that we are campaigning to add new material to our ranks, let us keep before this dentist of tomorrow the broad and interesting program that awaits him; and emphasize his usefulness in Public Health activities, child guidance, clinical activities and the importance of properly training himself to be a Public Citizen No. 1. As dentists our way seems quite clear. Let every man in this room resolve to carry on this campaign in his community, so that we may fill up these classes in both Universities of our group, and as many others as possible. In the dental field of our racial identity, the surface is hardly scratched. If young men are correctly guided and encouraged they will catch the spirit, and certainly a bright future awaits them.

#### *Legal or Judicial Committee*

At this session, it is important that we consider taking the necessary steps for a Charter and Incorporation. Without this protection, we are not sure of our name or our legal status. A Legal Committee has been appointed and the Chair hopes this Committee will be ready to bring us a complete report with instructions for the necessary procedure.

Since our last session, Socialized Dentistry has come in for a lot of discussion. So far nothing tangible has been worked out, and, from the maze of data pro and con, it would require the services of a "Phila-

delphia Lawyer" to interpret the many legal aspects of this new social order. We do not have a "Philadelphia Lawyer," but we are fortunate in having as Chairman of this important Committee a very capable gentleman who holds a degree of law as well as dentistry. I refer to Dr. Jackson L. Davis, of Washington, D. C.

### *Dental Education and Publicity*

It is very necessary for all national bodies to have a medium whereby members can keep in touch with one another, and to broadcast the activities and deliberations of the association. For the present we are fortunate in having at our disposal a periodical that is providing this most needed channel. I refer to THE DENTOSCOPE, edited by members of the dental staff of Howard University, and co-edited by men out in the field. The use of this periodical has been offered in good faith, and without any strings, and will serve the purpose until such time when this body can afford to have its own publication, which, eventually, will be very necessary. We are hoping to have men in the various fields of research, also men that can and will contribute original articles. As we grow we will have such a wealth of information that a national publication will be very necessary. Our hats are in the ring and we will have to compete with the standards set by other organizations.

### *Committee On Economics*

Many members of the National Dental Association are also members of the American Dental Association, and are eligible to the benefits of this organization's insurance and old age pensions. In many sections of the country, because of accident of birth, men are denied membership in this body, hence they miss a feature that has so much merit. The National Dental Association, as soon as feasible, should start planning some means of establishing insurance protection for its members. This will be a strong selling point, and will serve to lift the burden of some of the less fortunate of our colleagues, in the afternoon of their lives.

### *Budget*

A matter that is vital to future growth is the subject of budget. The writer is ever mindful of our limited treasury, and also that we have to crawl before we can walk. However, if we are ever to build a strong association, we will have to begin by paying our way. I

refer to the matter of traveling expenses for members of the Executive Board and the Official Family. The Chair would have been somewhat hesitant about bringing up this matter before, for obvious reasons, but it is very necessary that some concern be given this important item. It is most essential that the Board have full attendance at the Mid-winter Sessions. It is equally important that these same officials be on hand at the annual meeting. It is too much to expect men to forego their work, give their time, and then pay their own expenses in order to attend to the business of your organization. No doubt some are altruistic enough to want to donate this time and money for the good of the cause. That is fine for the man who can afford it, but very often we lose good material because the individual feels he just cannot give what the office calls for. When your officers are receiving a competence, whether in salary or mileage and per diem allowance, the Association has some claim on them and can demand performance of duty. With such a plan, most men will strain a point to be on hand. It is imperative that our officers function, and, this will be assured if the proper incentive is offered. The above proposal is the solution, and the results will more than equalize the expense.

#### *Public Relations*

Our membership is increasing from year to year, and we are gaining in prestige. We still have a competitor, which is a good feature, for it will serve to keep us on our toes. But we want the public to know about us and to know the truth. We want people to know what we are doing, and what are our aims, and whether we are really going at this work in a serious manner. In order to cover thoroughly this field we should have a Public Relations Committee. This will use every avenue, namely, The Press; Radio; Lectures; Parent Associations; Schools; Clinics and Medical Associations. We are beginning to become ballot conscious, and beginning to appreciate what can be accomplished by its judicious use. Hence, it is not too much to anticipate members of our dental group on School Boards, Hospital Staffs, Boards of Health, and even in the Legislative Halls. Proper publicity by a real live committee can bring all this about, and the value of having men of our profession in such key positions is certainly obvious.

#### *Summary*

Our work for this session:

1. Adoption of Constitution,
2. Articles of Incorporation and Charter,
3. Correct interpretation of Socialized Dentistry, and its ramifications,

4. Insurance and Old Age Plans,
5. Budget planning,
6. Dental School campaign, to encourage students to enter,
7. Developing and selling National Dental Association,
8. Using the Committee on Public Relations for educating the laity, thereby increasing our usefulness and incomes,
9. Supporting and contributing to the official periodical.

### *Personnel*

To be chosen the third President of this splendid Organization is a great honor, and I want the body to know I appreciate its confidence, cooperation and tolerance. I succeeded two very able men, (Drs. Ferguson and Wiseman). These gentlemen left some high standards and some definite work to carry on, and I have complied with this trust to the best of my ability. I want to pay tribute to the Executive Committee, and its able Secretary; the office of the General Secretary and Treasurer; the Chairman and members of the Program Committee. Without the support and full cooperation of these officers and members, my administration would have been a failure. It is most gratifying to find a man here and there who takes an office for the work that is to be done. Most of us just want to get our names on the stationery, or get a little free publicity. I want, particularly, to compliment the President-Elect. He has kept in constant touch with the President's office throughout the year, and has been responsible for the continued interest and support of the Tennessee contingent. I want, also, to mention our real, live Publicity man, who has been on the job every minute, and is responsible for the listings you have read in the many periodicals.

In closing, may I call your attention to the fact that the local committee has gone to great lengths to plan for your comfort, your scientific program and your enjoyment. Let us show our appreciation by our promptness in attending sessions, particularly those in the morning. Please do not have essayists and clinicians here at the appointed hour, and you still be in bed from last night's "hang-over." We are too big for that. We are here for business and to enjoy the hospitality of our hosts. Let us attend to our business in a business-like manner. Do not fail to spend some time with our exhibitors. Go to their booths and register. This will convince them that we are interested, and it will help to sell our cause. We are going to have a great session, and, to paraphrase a quotation from a great Englishman, let every man do his duty.